



Press Release

ABIM 2017: The biggest gathering of biocontrol professionals – ever.

(Brussels, 03.11.17) The Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting (ABIM) held a record gathering of the biocontrol industry last week in Basel, Switzerland. The 12th ABIM conference, which took place 23 - 25 October at the Congress Center in Basel, attracted almost 1050 delegates (a 16% increase on 2016) from over 500 companies and 52 different countries.

IBMA President, Willem Ravensberg, said: "The Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting (ABIM) 2017 was such a well-attended gathering of the sector that we can say with confidence - there have rarely been so many people committed to biological pest management assembled under one roof."

This year's record number of visitors, since the conference was founded twelve years ago, reflects the spirit of optimism and the growth of the industry in biological crop protection. To celebrate the landmark number, the lucky 1000th visitor, Joe Schmidt from BioConsortia Inc. (USA) was presented with a bottle of wine by IBMA Executive Director, David Cary.

David said, "We are constantly encouraged by the growth in visitor numbers and this reflects the Steering Committee's continuing commitment to promoting a unique event, showcasing innovation, excellence and professionalism in the industry."

Lucius Tamm from ABIM co-organisers, the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL), in his welcoming address, pointed to the enormous growth of organic farming worldwide: While only 11 million hectares of crops were grown organically globally in 1999, the figure has grown to 50 million hectares last year; a fivefold increase in just 17 years. "Organic agriculture has the strongest growth in agriculture," emphasized Tamm, "but we are pleased to report, that biocontrol solutions have now even a much bigger market in conventional agriculture than in the booming organic sector!" he added.

Wandering among the 69 international exhibitors, participants of ABIM could inform themselves about the latest product innovations and services that would help shape the future direction of the industry.

This year's presentation highlights included:

The award for this year's Bernard Blum Award, for novel biocontrol solutions that will make an impact on this rapidly growing market, was given to CBC Europe for the product Tremos, a digital electronic system used to disrupt location and mating of leafhopper species. Although more physical than biological, the approach clearly shows an understanding of insect behaviour and using a novel approach to achieve control.

In Monday evening's keynote address, Koppert's Managing Director, Paul Koppert recounted the early days and formation of Koppert Biological Systems, who this year celebrate 50 years as a company. Paul's presentation included a specially commissioned video demonstrating the history and philosophy of the company both at home and overseas. Those who watched the video, Paul said, would see that core to the success of the company was its focus on people. At the end of his

presentation, Paul Koppert personally presented Willem Ravensberg, as President of IBMA, with the revised edition of their book 'Knowing & Recognizing' which was also launched at this year's ABIM.

In the second keynote address on Tuesday night, CABI Executive Director for Global Operations, Dr Ulrich Kuhlmann, called for more collaboration between the public and private sectors to encourage the use of biological controls by smallholder farmers to tackle damaging pests. While the number of biological control agents and products available to farmers is greater than ever, the use of these products, in comparison to other control methods such as pesticides, is still very low and one of the steps required for the use of biological control agents by farmers, is their recommendation by extension services. To demonstrate and assist him in his presentation, Dr Kuhlmann was ably supported by Henry Msatilomo, Chief Agricultural Extension Officer, Malawi and Alex Semakula, Agricultural Extension Officer, Uganda.

Whilst Monday was dominated by professional working group meetings and an opportunity to spend time in the exhibition, Tuesday and Wednesday were given over to 35 diverse presentations from across the industry. Each working group had an opportunity to present their segments latest developments during the 3-day programme. In addition, Tuesday started with the all-important examination of the regulatory conditions affecting the speed of development in the market and this year ABIM was pleased to host contributions from three influencing organisations, with presentations from DG Sante, FAO and OECD Expert Group on Biopesticides and provided delegates with the opportunity to speak direct with key regulatory influencers. The programme also included on Wednesday morning an excellent panel discussion looking at 'Innovations Influencing Implementation of Biocontrol.'

For those thinking about ABIM 2018, the Steering Committee is already focused on how to make the next ABIM bigger and better. Everyone is welcome. Put the date in your diary for 22-24th October 2018 and we look forward to seeing you there.

For more information visit www.abim.ch

Images and captions

Larger versions of the images can be found on

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gxwsqeq318ze6mw/AACQDW9i61hBkQ7yP9WoDGNMa?dl=0>
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Vittorio Veronelli of CBC Europe uniquely displays the award for this year's Bernard Blum Award which was given for the company's new product Tremos, a digital electronic system used to disrupt location and mating of leafhopper species.



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Like many of the 69 exhibitors the team from Seipasa, Spain were kept busy informing visitors about the latest biocontrol product innovations and services.



David Cary, IBMA Executive Director said "We are constantly encouraged by the growth in visitor numbers this is a reflection of the Steering Committee's continuing commitment to promoting a unique event showcasing innovation, excellence and professionalism in the industry."



In addition to individual presentations, Wednesday morning was given over to a panel discussion looking at 'Innovations Influencing Implementation of Biocontrol.'

Editors Notes

ABIM is jointly organised by FiBL Switzerland (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) and the IBMA (International Biocontrol Manufacturers' Association). The two parties have managed the event since 2006 when it was first held in Lucerne and at the Congress Center Basel since 2013. As a global meeting event and venue, ABIM helps facilitate the development of biocontrol products, to make plant protection safer and more sustainable. ABIM provides networking opportunities and up-to-date information to the biocontrol industry. ABIM encourages the exchange between small and large companies as well as between governmental authorities and researchers.

The Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting ABIM is a joint project of the International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association IBMA and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL.

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